



Get started: Telling the story of your journalism



How would you describe the value you offer your users? What sets you apart? What do you want them to think or feel when they see you in their social feed?

Start by looking at your mission statement, if you have one. Keep in mind, though, that mission statements are often internally focused, using insider language and orienting around the people who work there. Your challenge now is to face those values out. Think of real people in front of you — your neighbors, your kids' teachers, your dedicated users and casual users. What do you offer them?

The story you need to tell is about your customers/audience/users, NOT about you. People don't care about you. They care what they get from you. They are the stars of the story.

Your story is about things like:

- The reason your organization or product exists
- What types of news consumers find value in what you provide
- What motivates your staff to come to work everyday
- A transparent view into the people behind the brand and who you are as an organization

Your story is not:

- Long
- Boring
- Relegated to a blog post or mission statement
- Reserved for the marketing team or business-side folks

Keep these tips in mind:

- Be conversational. Practice explaining it to friends over coffee.
- Be human (we are invested in this community as neighbors, not just as journalists).
- Describe your competitive advantage (we help you live your life by giving you ____ no one else does).
- Describe your goals (we get beyond the headlines to help you understand your community).
- Consider your relationship to user feedback (we respond to what you tell us you want us to cover ... we know from how many of you read and shared a story last month that this kind of news matters to you ... here's more).
- Demonstrate your fairness (today, we bring you this side of a story ... here's a link to yesterday's story that focused on another angle).
- Challenge assumptions (we haven't reported on rumors because they haven't been verified yet, not because we're hiding something).
- Avoid jargon (we value immediacy, we're digital first, etc.).

As you work on this very important story, think about it can be incorporated into the jobs of anyone who communicates with your users. How can reporters and sales reps bring it into face-to-face interactions? How does it show up in your editors' columns? Your social strategy?



Try this on your own

PREP QUESTION NO. 1: What do you do better than anyone else in your market or niche?

PREP QUESTION NO. 2: How would you want your users to describe you to their friends?

THEN FILL OUT THIS CHART:

What do you as an organization believe in or stand for? What values do you want your users to associate with you?	What specific content could you attach to those characteristics and values? List them here and draw a line between the two columns.

Try this with your colleagues

1. Get a stack of post-it notes. Have everyone write down key words or phrases that best describe your organization. Put them on a wall, window or white board.
2. Elect a few people to take a stab at sorting them into categories or themes, then come back together to look at it. Move post-its around until you have themes you're happy with and label the themes.
3. Have people vote for the themes that matter most. (Try making hashmarks on the labels.) Rank them in order of collective priority.
4. Get into groups, with each group taking a theme. Draft multiple sentences describing each theme, working to get as specific as possible. Put those sentences on post-its on a new wall.
5. Have the whole group vote for their favorite sentence under each theme.

Questions? Ideas for further work on trust? Tips to share from your work? Contact project lead Joy Mayer at joy@joymayer.com.